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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-first session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

(Item 4 (a))

Section 11A. Trade and Development

1. At its 12th meeting, on 19 June 2001, the Committee considered section 11A, Trade and development, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. Strong support was expressed for the programme overall and for the activities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). UNCTAD was particularly commended for the successful preparation of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. A view was expressed that the Committee was not the appropriate body to commend UNCTAD for the preparation of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

4. Views were expressed that the fascicle for section 11A (A/56/6 (Sect. 11A)) needed to be reissued and brought in line with the outcome of the Third United

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Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. It was also held that it would not be appropriate for the Committee to review subprogramme 5. Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, could prejudice the proposals that the Secretary-General had been requested to submit to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, as per paragraph 116 of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in June 2001. Other views were expressed that there was no need to reissue the fascicle, and that the Committee should recommend the approval of section 11A since the agreed conclusions of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget of UNCTAD adopted on 12 June 2001 (as contained in E/AC.51/2001/10), in particular paragraphs 1 and 7, offered a suitable course of action.

5. Satisfaction was expressed with the results-based format of the budget document; however, views were also expressed that further improvement could be achieved. It was recommended that this programmatic framework be incorporated into the everyday work of UNCTAD. Nevertheless, some indicators, in particular in the research and analysis area, were considered to be vague, not time-sensitive, or otherwise difficult to measure. More information was required on how some of the indicators would be measured in practice. Some of the external factors were also seen as being too generic. The results-based budget format should also have been applied to executive direction and management and to programme support. The view was expressed that the annual evaluation undertaken by the substantive divisions of UNCTAD should serve as a role model for other departments of the United Nations Secretariat.

6. On the question of resources, it was felt that more resources should be dedicated to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 and that the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries should be strengthened. Clarification was sought on the allocation of resources between subprogrammes 1A and 1B in subprogramme 1, Globalization, interdependence and development. The link between activities undertaken under section 1B and the sectoral work, in particular technical assistance, needed to be spelled out clearly. The establishment of a unit for landlocked developing countries in the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries was noted with appreciation. Views were also expressed that it was premature to propose the strengthening of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed Countries, or to establish a unit for landlocked developing countries in the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries, taking into account that the Secretary-General had been requested to prepare a report on the operationalization of the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held at Brussels. Concern was expressed at the amount of resources proposed for consultants and experts throughout the section. The need to ensure that pledged voluntary contributions were forthcoming was underlined.

7. The view was expressed that the programme should focus its activities on areas where it had a comparative advantage, rather than expand into every development-related topic. UNCTAD should continue to deepen its expertise in selected areas, rather than broaden them. Another view was expressed that the activities of

UNCTAD were already focused and in coordination with other development-related agencies. The view was expressed that the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development duplicated activities in other areas of the Organization. It was suggested that it should be abolished and resources diverted to other activities. Support was also expressed for the valuable services provided by the Commission and the continuation of its work. It was noted that some of the proposed research activities on Africa should be more clearly coordinated with activities reflected under sections 10 and 16 of the proposed programme budget.

8. Other developments such as the increased use of videoconferencing and the falling vacancy rate were welcomed. The need to show the impact of modern technology on the activities of UNCTAD was underlined. Emphasis was placed on the strengthening of database and information management systems referred to in this section.

9. The creation of a Division of Management, which should enable rationalization and streamlining of administrative activities, was welcomed.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 11A, Trade and development, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, subject to the following modification:

Paragraph 11A.2

After the last sentence, insert the following sentence: "It is foreseen that the Trade and Development Board will mainstream the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 within the work programme of UNCTAD, as well as in the UNCTAD intergovernmental process. It is also foreseen that similar efforts will be undertaken by the governing bodies of all United Nations system organizations, as appropriate."

11. The Committee recommended that, when considering section 11A, the General Assembly also take into account the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held at Brussels, as endorsed by the Assembly.